

Specification Amendments

On page 6, immediately prior to the Section entitled "Detailed Description of the Invention", please insert the following new paragraph:

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the guide plate of the invention, with the moving tracks shown in the guide slots.

On page 7, please replace the first full paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, drive module 10 includes a housing 24 for supporting a drive motor 44 as well as two "runs" 14a and 14b of the dual-lane track 14 (also shown in Figure 5 ~~Figures 5 and 6~~). The chains 26 ~~(which form the conveyors for transporting specimen carriers 20)~~ of the inside and outside lanes enter the module 10 at the upstream end 24a of housing 24 in a horizontal plane, hereinafter identified as the drive plane "P", formed by the plane of the upper surfaces of plates 28 of each chain 26.

(full text without markings)

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, drive module 10 includes a housing 24 for supporting a drive motor 44 as well as two "runs" 14a and 14b of the dual-lane track 14 (also shown in Figure 5). The chains 26 of the inside and outside lanes enter the module 10 at the upstream end 24a of housing 24 in a horizontal plane, hereinafter identified as the drive plane "P", formed by the plane of the upper surfaces of plates 28 of each chain 26.

On page 7, please replace the second full paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

Referring first to the outside lane 18 of track 14, and referring particularly to Figure 6, it can be seen that chain 26 enters the drive module 10 at an upstream end 24a of housing 24 and proceeds in a straight path to the drive sprocket 40. ~~The path of conveyor chain 26 through the drive module 10 is shown by arrows 27 in Figure 6.~~ Drive sprocket 40 engages the rods 38 of the links 36 (shown only in Figure 2) to pull the chain 26, similar to prior art drives. However, the inventors herein have increased the performance and capabilities of the drive by altering the pathway of the chain 26 downward and around the drive sprocket 40 to thereby wrap around a portion of the sprocket 40. Chain 26 then proceeds under the sprocket 40 and back to the housing upstream end 24a (also shown in Figure 3), where it is wrapped upwardly around an idler sprocket 46 ~~(see arrows 27 in Figure 6)~~ and then proceeds in a downstream direction in the drive plane P (see Figure 4), immediately adjacent the first segment 26a of chain 26 (as shown in Figure 5).

(full text without markings)

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herein have increased the performance and capabilities of the drive by altering the pathway of the chain 26 downward and around the drive sprocket 40 to thereby wrap around a portion of the sprocket 40. Chain 26 then proceeds under the sprocket 40 and back to the housing upstream end 24a (also shown in Figure 3), where it is wrapped upwardly around an idler sprocket 46 and then proceeds in a downstream direction in the drive plane P (see Figure 4), immediately adjacent the first segment 26a of chain 26 (as shown in Figure 5).

On page 8, please replace the second full paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

Referring now to Figure 6, a carrier guide plate 48 is mounted on the upper end of housing 24 to guide specimen carriers 20 as they travel from the upstream end 24a to the downstream end 24b of the housing 24 on the drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4). Guide plate 48 has two slots 50 and 52 formed therethrough, parallel to one another and extending from end to end. Slot 50 is aligned with the outside lane 18 of track 14 where the track connects with the upstream end 24a of housing 24, and continues to guide a specimen carrier 20 on the top of plates 28 of segment 26a of conveyor chain 26. About midway along segment 26a, slot 50 angles transversely and extends over segment 26b of chain 26. ~~The sidewalls 50a and 50b of slot 50 thereby shift a specimen carrier 20 carried on segment 26a to the adjacent segment 26b of conveyor chain 26.~~ Slot 50 and segment 26b of chain 26 shift transversely back to the

original line of travel of segment 26a immediately prior to exiting module 10 at the downstream end 24b of housing 24, ~~at a location in slot 50 identified as 50c.~~
Thus, the track 14 is aligned at the opposing ends of module 10.

(full text without markings)

Referring now to Figure 6, a carrier guide plate 48 is mounted on the upper end of housing 24 to guide specimen carriers 20 as they travel from the upstream end 24a to the downstream end 24b of the housing 24 on the drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4). Guide plate 48 has two slots 50 and 52 formed therethrough, parallel to one another and extending from end to end. Slot 50 is aligned with the outside lane 18 of track 14 where the track connects with the upstream end 24a of housing 24, and continues to guide a specimen carrier 20 on the top of plates 28 of segment 26a of conveyor chain 26. About midway along segment 26a, slot 50 angles transversely and extends over segment 26b of chain 26. Slot 50 and segment 26b of chain 26 shift transversely back to the original line of travel of segment 26a immediately prior to exiting module 10 at the downstream end 24b of housing 24. Thus, the track 14 is aligned at the opposing ends of module 10.

On page 8, please replace the last paragraph with the following:

(full text with markings)

Because the plates 28 of chain 26 reside within the same drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4), specimen carriers 20 will easily slide transversely from chain segment 26a to segment 26b ~~between slot sidewalls 50a and 50b~~, without

interruption of transport. While not described in detail herein, the inside lane 16 operates in the same fashion, with a first segment 26a of chain 26 wrapping around a drive sprocket 53 ~~(as shown by arrows 27')~~, thence around an idler sprocket 54, and back into the same drive plane P adjacent the first chain segment 26a to form a second chain segment 26b which exits the drive module in alignment with the entry of the inside lane 16.

(full text without markings)

Because the plates 28 of chain 26 reside within the same drive plane P (shown only in Figure 4), specimen carriers 20 will easily slide transversely from chain segment 26a to segment 26b, without interruption of transport. While not described in detail herein, the inside lane 16 operates in the same fashion, with a first segment 26a of chain 26 wrapping around a drive sprocket 53, thence around an idler sprocket 54, and back into the same drive plane P adjacent the first chain segment 26a to form a second chain segment 26b which exits the drive module in alignment with the entry of the inside lane 16.